

## Message Text

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ACTION EA-14

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FM AMEMBASSY TOKYO

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 1813

INFO CINCPAC HONOLULU HI

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CINCPAC FOR POLAD

E.O. 11652: N/A

TAGS: PINT JA

SUBJ: YASUKUNI SHRINE BILL CONTROVERSY

SUMMARY: BILL NOW PENDING BEFORE DIET TO PUT YASUKUNI SHRINE UNDER STATE PROTECTION AS OFFICIAL MEMORIAL TO WAR DEAD IS FOCUS OF HEATED CONTROVERSY ON CONSTITUTIONAL ISSUE OF "SEPARATION OF RELIGION AND POLITICS". ALTHOUGH SUPPORTERS ARE PUSHING FOR EARLY DIET PASSAGE, PROSPECTS ARE STRONG THAT GOJ WILL ALLOW ISSUE TO DIE IN DIET FOR FIFTH TIME. END SUMMARY

1. ACCORDING PRESS REPORTS, ABOUT 100 ACADEMICS, RELIGIOUS LEADERS, AND LAWYERS MET IN TOKYO SUNDAY, MAY 12, TO FORM "NATIONAL COUNCIL TO GUARD AGAINST INFRINGEMENT OF SEPARATION OF RELIGION AND POLITICS". OBJECTIVE OF NEW GROUP SKETO MOBILIZE OPPOSITION TO BILL NOW PENDING BEFORE DIET TO PUT YASUKUNI SHRINE (SHINTO) UNDER STATE PROTECTION AND SUBSIDY. OPPONENTS OF BILL CLAIM THAT LEGISLATION IS VIOLATION OF ARTICLE 20 OF CONSTITUTION WHICH SPECIFIES NO RELIGIOUS ORGANIZATION SHALL RECEIVE ANY PRIVILEGES FROM THE STATE. CRITICS OF SHRINE BILL ALSO CHARGE THAT GRANTING SPECIAL STATE PROTECTION TO YASUKUNI WILL BE ENTERING WEDGE FOR LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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RESTORATION OF STATE SHINTO AND MILITARIST RULE AND

WILL UNDERMINE POSTWAR JAPANESE DEMOCRACY.

2. PROPONENTS OF BILL ARE ALSO ORGANIZED INTO POWERFUL "NATIONAL COUNCIL FOR STATE SUPPORT OF YASUKUNI SHRINE" WHICH REPRESENTS SOME 40 ORGANIZATIONS OF WAR BEREAVED FAMILIES AND PATRIOTIC GROUPS WITH MEMBERSHIP INCLUDING ESTIMATED 700,000 VOTING AGE MEMBERS. ADVOCATES OF BILL HAVE BEEN AGITATING SINCE 1952 ON GROUNDS THAT SHRINE HAS BEEN DEDICATED SINCE 1869 TO SOULS OF SOLDIERS WHO SACRIFICED LIVES FOR JAPAN AND NATION OWES IT TO WAR DEAD TO SUPPORT SHRINE, WHICH LOST PRIVILEGED STATUS IN 1945 AS RESULT OF U.S. OCCUPATION POLICY. LDP, UNDER PRESSURE FROM THESE GROUPS, HAD ALREADY PRESENTED YASUKUNI SHRINE BILLS TO DIET FOUR TIMES SINCE 1969 ONLY TO HAVE THEM DIE ABORNING. THIS YEAR, BILL WAS AGAIN SUBMITTED AND SUDDENLY VOTED OUT OF COMMITTEE IN SUPRISE MOVE WHICH CAUSED OPPOSITION TO BOYCOTT ALL DIET PROCEEDINGS IN PROTEST FOR 11 DAYS (REFTEL). DIET DELIBERATIONS WERE RESUMED APRIL 23 ONLY AFTER LENGTHY NEGOTIATIONS WITH OPPOSITION PARTIES WHO AGREED TO ENTRUST ENTIRE MATTER TO DISCRETION OF LOWER HOUSE SPEAKER SHIGESABURO MAEO.

3. MOST DIET OBSERVERS CONSIDER BILL HAS LITTLE CHANCE OF ENACTMENT AND IS BEING EXPLOITED BY DIETMEN ON BOTH SIDES OF ISSUE LARGELY AS ELECTION PLOY. DIET SOURCES HAVE INFORMED EMBOFF THAT LOWER HOUSE AGENDA PRECLUDES PLENARY VOTE ON BILL BEFORE MAY 27. THIS WOULD MEAN UPPER HOUSE APPROVAL VIRTUALLY OUT OF QUESTION SINCE UPPER HOUSE PRESIDENT KENZO KONO HAS INDICATED HE WOULD WANT AT LEAST 3 WEEKS TO DELIBERATE MATTER. EMBASSY BELIEVES ORIGINAL DEAL WITH MAEO, WHICH ALLOWED DIET TO RESUME BUSINESS ON APRIL 23, INCLUDED TACIT UNDERSTANDING THAT BILL IN END WOULD AGAIN BE ALLOWED TO DIE ON VINE.

4. COMMENT: YASUKUNI SHRINE MERRY-GO-ROUND CAN BE CONSIDERED MERE SIDE SHOW IN ELECTION CAMPAIGN, AND IS BELIEVED TO HAVE BEEN ALLOWED TO COME TO HEAD THIS TIME AS PART OF PRIME MINISTER TANAKA'S DELIBERATE LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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EFFORTS TO CREATE ELECTION ISSUES OTHER THAN INFLATION. LDP MUST SHOW SUPPORTERS OF SHRINE BILL IT IS DOING BEST IT CAN TO PASS IT; AT SAME TIME IT CANNOT AFFORD TO GIVE OPPOSITION ISSUE TO TIE UP DIET AND BLOCK OTHER GOJ-SPONSORED LEGISLATION WHICH GOJ NEEDS TO HAVE PASSED. END COMMENT.  
SHOESMITH

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